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A SERIOUS

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REFLECTION

ON THE

Grievous Scandal

OF

PROFANE LANGUAGE

IN

CONVERSATION.



L O N D O N :

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A Serious

REFLECTION

On the grievous Scandal of

PROFANE LANGUAGE

IN

CONVERSATION.

S I R,



THE Profane Speeches you uttered when I was last in your Company, have raised such a Horror in my Mind, that I cannot ease it any Way but by writing my Sentiments plainly to you, as the Case requires; and I pray God give you and me a just Sense of the whole Matter, for the Sake of his dear Son.

Had I had Courage to have stood up boldly, as I was in Duty bound, in the Cause of Almighty God, and for the Honour of his Holy Name; or at least

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manifested a deeper Sorrow for those Passages which were contrary to the same, I might have escaped that Guilt and Regret which my shameful Silence and Disregard have brought upon me. But my silly Shamefacedness, with a fancied Point of Manners, and the Conceit of a more convenient Season, did most unworthily bridle my Lips from reproving your Profaneness, and too much stifle my Resentment of it; contrary to the Dictates of my Reason and Conscience.

And now I am full of Sorrow when I consider, that I am never like to have such an Opportunity again, in which the same Company may be, as they might then have been, awakened to their proper Duty in this Case by my Example; or might at least have been Witnesses of my Protestation against your insufferable Blasphemies. I consider further, that it is the most shameful Thing in the World, that any one should be more bold in the Service of malicious damned Devils, than others for their infinitely loving and merciful God. This is a Weight of Shame and Guilt which I cannot bear, and is enough, without infinite Mercy, to sink me into eternal Destruction; and all this

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is owing to the Froth and Poison of your ungodly Lips.

As to the Point of Manners, which some suppose to be infringed by the Person that reproves a publick Swearer as publickly as he proclaims his Impiety ; there is no Ground at all for this Accusation. The Breach of Manners is clearly on the Swearer's Side, for that he rudely affronts the whole Company, by dishonouring and basely treating their dearest Friend, their greatest Patron, their nearest Relation, and their most gracious and glorious Prince ; yea, the Author of their Life and Happiness, that is, their GOD.

This, this is that which creates my Horror, and sharpens my Grief: I had not the Heart to stand up for the greatest and best of all Beings. I did not truly resent an Affront done to Him, in whom I *live, and move, and have my being* ; and who does me Good every Moment : I saw infinite Majesty and Glory scorn'd, and shewed no Dislike to the abominable Fact. I heard infinite Goodness and Excellency treated at a vile Rate, and I seemed, by my base and cowardly Silence, to consent to it. O! may that Great and Generous Goodness, which

spared you when you blasphemed, forgive my shameful Omission to reprove you for so doing, and inspire me with such Zeal and Courage for the future, that I may never again omit a proper Season for it. And I pray God to give you his Grace, that you may never indulge yourself in such hateful and horrible Speeches, which dishonour Almighty God, and wound all but senseless Men.

You may perhaps think, that I labour under an unreasonable Tenderneſs of Conſcience, and that neither You nor I are in ſuch Danger as I apprehend on the Account of a few Words ſpoken in common Diſcourſe. But how can we think ſo, when the Judge of the World hath ſaid, *By thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned*, Mat. xii. 37. You may aſſure yourſelf, that in your late Swearing, you ſpake Words that are enough to condemn you for ever; for *God will not hold them guiltleſs that take his Name in vain*: And alas! I did not reſent it ſo as to ſhun a Share in the Condemnation. For as in the Caſe of Treason, if we hear treaſonable Words, and do not ſpeedily diſcover them to ſome Magiſtrate with juſt Diſlike, we contract
a Part

Profane Language in Conversation. 7

a Part of the Crime; so this Case of Conscience seems to be; and so the Indictment runs, we see, at God's Bar, *Prov. xxix. 24. He beareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not*; which seems in the foregoing Words to be likened to a Man's concealing of stolen Goods, which makes him a Partner with the Thief. He did not discover it to the Magistrate, as in that Case, and in that of Treason, the Person ought to do, that would not be condemned as an Accomplice in the Crime.

And for this Reason, I am concerned that those Ten Days are elapsed, in which we are ordered by the Law of our Land to give Information to the Magistrate, of this intolerable Offence against God; otherwise I should appeal to him in the Case before us, as hereafter I intend to do on the like Occasion. For I cannot but think it an inexcusable Fault, for any Christian to neglect those useful Assistances which the Civil Power offers us, to remove the Scandals of our Religion, and prevent the Judgments of God. And they are pitiful Soldiers indeed, that desert the Interests of the Captain of their Salvation in so good a Work, for any Reproaches that unreasonable Men

may cast upon them: which, if we consider with what awful Vows and Pledges we list ourselves Soldiers in the Militant Church of Christ at our Baptism, will appear to be a very base and a very odious Unfaithfulness.

As to the profane Swearer himself, he seems to be an open and impudent Deserter from the Prince of Light, and a loud and earnest Abettor of the Cause of the Prince of Darkness. He plainly bids Defiance to God, and commits a manifest Outrage, not only against his Baptism, but against all Religion, both Natural and Revealed. A sensible Heathen would tremble at his daring Impiety, as well as a Christian or a *Jew*. There is such a Violation of Reason in it, that he that is habituated to it, must be accounted either mad or stupid. Either he has no Understanding, or he does not use it. He does not know, or does not consider, the terrible Consequence of provoking an Almighty Being to take Vengeance upon him.

Let me therefore entreat you to consider the infinite Majesty, Glory and Excellency of God, which are visible in all his Works: Look up to the glorious Fa-
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brick of the Heavens; consider the Beauty, Order, and Number of all those marvellous Luminaries above: Though they are immensely great, and innumerable many, yet what exact Distances do they keep, and how punctually do they observe the critical Moment of their Rising and Going down? Can this be without the Direction of infinite Wisdom, the Support of infinite Power, and the Disposition of infinite Goodness? Can any reasonable Creature question the Being, or the Excellency of the Lord of this Host, when we see it mustered, marshalled, and marched, by such exact Rules and Orders? The *Psalmist* truly observes, that the *heavens declare the glory of God*. How great and marvellous must the Creator of these Things needs be! Who can conceive the least Degree of his glorious Majesty; or tell us how happy his adopted Children are, and how wretched his Enemies? How great and heinous must every Offence against such infinite Majesty appear to be, and what sore Punishment does it deserve?

Look round also on the Face of the Earth, where you behold innumerable Sorts of living Creatures, each of them

wonderfully made, and no less wonderfully provided for, and disposed of by the stated Orders of the good Creator; and every one of them peculiarly constituted, shaped, and inclined, according to its Use and Post in the Universe. If we curiously trace the rising Degrees of Life and Excellency thorough the numerous Kinds of living Creatures, which fill up the wide Distance betwixt a poor little Muscle, which only discovers its Life by a small Motion; and a glorious Cherub, whose Excellency we cannot conceive: And if we observe all along, how near the highest Creature of one Kind comes to the lowest of the Kind above it, yet the various Species or Kinds of Creatures are all along preserved distinct and entire, and lead us by Degrees nearer and nearer towards the glorious Creator of all: I say, if we consider these Things with the Reason that God has given us, we cannot but break forth in the highest Admiration of the glorious Creator, and say with the Psalmist on the like Occasion; *O Lord, how marvellous are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!* in a depth of Wisdom indeed, past our fathoming or finding out.

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Our Admiration will farther increase upon us, if we consider that little World of Creatures which cannot be seen by us without the Assistance of those curious Glasses, which the late ingenious Inquirers into the Works of God have found out. For it will puzzle the most accurate Naturalist to describe to us the wonderful Workmanship of God, in the Position, Connexion, and Correspondence of the various Parts of a Creature not so big as the Thousandth Part of a Grain of Sand; of which there are Swarms almost over the Face of the Earth, and even in the Bodies of living Creatures.

If we farther consider the wise and orderly, tho' sometimes mysterious Steps of Divine Providence, as they lie before us in all Histories, and even in our own common Observation, we cannot but see the great Wisdom and Goodness of God. Yet, if we do but look back for about twenty Years on the Affairs of our own Nation, and consider the wonderful Deliverances, Revolutions, and Victories, wherewith God hath graciously favoured us, and hitherto disappointed the Hopes and Efforts of the grand Enemy to our Religion and Liberties, and yet withal
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forely chastized us for our Sins all along, we shall even be forced to a serious Acknowledgement, that *there is a righteous God that judgeth the earth.*

But to direct you to a more plain and perfect Declaration of the Sovereignty and Perfections of Almighty God ; look, I beseech you, into the Holy Scriptures which are his Oracles, and observe there, what terrible Plagues and Destructions, the Sins of Men have brought upon them in all Ages of the World ; in which some notorious Sinners have been destroyed by a Deluge of Waters ; others by a Shower of Fire from Heaven ; other some by the gaping Earth ; and others by stormy Winds ; which shews us, that the Creator of all Things can make the very Elements, which are naturally the necessary Means of our Subsistence, the Means of our speedy Destruction. Yea, He can arm the whole Creation against us, and make all his Creatures, from the *lofty stars* in the Firmament, to the *creeping things* on the Earth, to fight against us, till we are destroyed. The Sword, Famine, Pestilence, and Thunderbolts, are but a Part of God's dreadful Artillery ; and what is worst of all, *God is able to destroy*

destroy men both in soul and body in Hell; the very thing which too many abandoned Wretches commonly call for, and challenge at his righteous Hands. O prodigious Folly! Horrible Impiety! tending most certainly to as prodigious and horrible an End.

Ah! how dreadful is the Wrath of this Almighty Lord God? Who can stand before Him when once He is angry; Can any Madness equal that of the profane Swearer? How can any one pretend to Reason or Discretion, that offends such a Being, and incurs his eternal Wrath, for a few ill Words, which afford no manner of Pleasure or Advantage? You may think that God is patient, and so He is, or you had before now been in the Pit of remediless Torments: But be you assured, that He is as Just as He is Merciful, and He hath punctually recorded every Oath, Imprecation and ill Word, that you have spoken in your whole Life; (a long and dismal Catalogue without doubt) and infinite Justice will require Satisfaction for every one of them: So that except you truly Repent, which is no easy Matter, it would have been better for you,
that

that God should have smitten you dead on the Spot, upon the first Act of Profaneness that you committed; for then the Measure of your Sin had been less, and your Torment might have been less in Degree, tho' eternal likewise in Duration. Whereas now, by your going on to multiply your Transgressions, you have as it were thrown so many Faggots more into the eternal Flames, to make them the more terribly tormenting.

These Things are so certain, and of such infinite Consequence, that I cannot but beseech you, with the utmost Earnestness, to consider your Ways, and to set yourself seriously to pray to God for his Grace, and Mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ, before you be for ever debarred of that inestimable Privilege; which when you die, and alas! how soon may that be, will be your Case.

Retire therefore, I pray you, as soon as you can, to your Chamber or Closet, and fall devoutly on your Knees before God, and bewail your Sins, and beg the Assistance of his holy Spirit, to enlighten your Mind, and renew your Heart, and to amend your Life, thro' the Means which He hath appointed in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinful Men:

Men : and fix on your Mind always the absolute Necessity of changing your unholy Life ; because a holy God cannot countenance or embrace a profane Profligate, whilst he continues so. Wherefore set yourself to a new manner of Life, thro' the Grace of God, and do it without delay, or it may never be done, and then you will certainly perish for ever.

You cannot deny, but you would do more than this to get a great temporal Estate ; and that you would submit to a very difficult course of Physick, to be cured of any dangerous Disease of your Body : and why will you not be as Just to your precious Soul, and to your eternal Estate ? Be assured, there is a very glorious State above, where holy People will be perfectly and eternally happy : And we may be much surer of attaining it, if we give all prudent Diligence to secure it, than we can be of getting or enjoying worldly Wealth ; because the Promises of Grace and Glory are more absolute and positive to such as duly seek them, than those which relate to temporal Things. And therefore how vain are they, who spend themselves and their Time in pursuing Bubbles, when with the same Labour they might possess inestimable and everlasting Riches ?

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Wherefore I farther entreat you to consider your truest and greatest Interests, and come to wise and sober Resolutions of resigning and conforming yourself wholly to the Will of God, who grants to all his faithful Servants a Title to his eternal Kingdom of Glory under his Hand and Seal, in his Word and Sacraments. And I beg you to come to this necessary Determination instantly and unalterably, as the Importance of the Case requires, and the infinite Weight of the Motives to it tends to fix you.

Consider, I pray you, do you believe that an infinitely Great, Wise, and Righteous God governs all Things, and will bring all Men to Judgement? And will you, can you offend Him any more by your profane Lips, or any other way of Offence against Him? Dare you challenge his everlasting Vengeance any more? Can you suffer your Soul to lie on the Brink of eternal Ruin any longer, without Concern? Can you despise such a brave and honourable, such a sweet and comfortable, such a reasonable and advantageous Way of Life, as the God that made you directs you to, which his Son's Blood was shed to restore you to a Capacity of, and in which the holy Spirit

Spirit graciously waits to conduct and confirm you, with a Joy inexpressible in the Way, and a Glory inconceivable in the End?

Can you now deliberately quit this Hope, and give yourself to the Delusions of evil Spirits, already damned, who seek to make you as miserable as themselves; and will rejoice to see you bound with *chains of everlasting darknes*, as they are? Will you not be prevailed upon, to take care of your own Life and Happiness, which the very Beasts cannot be forced to relinquish; and to cease to make Provision for your own everlasting Torment? As yet you may prevent it, but I cannot say that the same Possibility will remain with you To-morrow; because no body can tell *what a day may bring forth*; for Death will render all the Means of Salvation ineffectual; and will fully instruct the unbelieving Sinner in the Doctrine of God's righteous Retributions in the other World, which he would not duly learn in this; and then what will all your vain Pleasure in Iniquity profit you?

What are you now the better for all your past Sins? Is not the poor little Pleasure of it gone? and has it not left a Load
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of Guilt upon your Conscience, with a fearful Expectation of Judgment? And if you live longer in Sin, thus it will be at last, when nothing of all your sinful Indulgences will be left, but the Shame and Regret, the Guilt and Punishment of them, which will remain with such as die in their Sins to all Eternity.

On the contrary; what can you lose by Religion? yea, what vast Advantages will you reap from it! It will give you Peace in your Mind, Honour among all Men, and Comfort in all Events on Earth; and will not fail to bring you to everlasting Rest, Bliss, and Glory hereafter. And all you will lose by it, in the usual State of Things, will be, that you cast away the Filth, Shame, and Torment of inordinate Desires, ill Speeches, and base Doings; instead of which you will enjoy a State of Sanctification and Honour. And then God will condescend to converse with you in his Ordinances, and bless you in your Enterprises and Enjoyments. And *whether you sit in your house, or travel on the way, or sleep in your bed*, you will have the Satisfaction of God's Presence with you, and of the Guardianship of his holy
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ly Angels about you; *that all things shall work together for your final good*; and that if you were now to die, you would go to everlasting Happiness.

What a blessed State of Life is this? how truly honourable, sweet, and happy! What a Wonder is it that all Men do not follow the Lord of Life, their only Saviour and Redeemer? and that all Places, where this blessed Gospel is preached, are not crowded with affectionate *bearers and doers* of his Will? In short, it is a Wonder that all the World does not run after Him. None ever shewed such Love to Mankind; none ever offered such Rewards to the mean, if sincere Services of Men. He bears the Chastisements of the Sins of his People. He washes away their Filth in his own Blood. He heals their Wounds, bears their Burdens, redresses their Grievances, pities their Infirmities, wipes away their Tears, succours them in Danger, leads them by the Hand, carries them in his Bosom, pardons their Sins, pleads their Cause, justifies them freely, and saves them eternally. O! who can express the Blessedness of such a People, or the least Part of the Happiness of the Person that is in such a Case! This

This is no fanciful gilding of the pious Christians Condition, but what they feel in the just Exercise of their Faith, Hope, and Love. We can bring you to many, praised be God, who can by a blessed Experience testify the Truth of these great Enjoyments of Religion here, which we have before hinted; and can with a joyful Attestation say, *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.—Godliness is profitable to all things, and bath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

But as for you, whilst you go on in your ungodly Life, you are not only a Stranger to those divine Joys, but are in danger of everlasting Misery. Forasmuch as you daily profane the holy Name of God, you demonstrate that neither the Love nor the Fear of God is in you: And therefore as to your present Case, you are lost and undone; and if you die thus, you will be as surely damned as the blasphemous Devils are; as will also all ungodly Men.

But as you have a Saviour offered you, the blessed Jesus, who, tho' he has left the
fallen

fallen Angels in Chains that are never to be filed off, yet he offers to become a gracious and loving Saviour unto Men: *For he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*; and he now offers you your Pardon and eternal Life, if you will from henceforth commit yourself to his Conduct in the Ways of his holy Gospel, in the Exercise of a renewing Repentance, and Faith unfeigned.

Be very speedy, therefore, and very hearty in your Acceptance of these Terms of Life and Salvation, and suffer not these inestimable Talents to lie buried by inexcusable Negligence and Unbelief. Reverence from henceforth the great and awful Name of Almighty GOD; sanctify with a just Regard his holy reserved Day; be serious and constant in attending on his holy Word and Sacraments; accustom yourself to good Thoughts and favourable Discourses; be deeply humble and meek; meditate often on the Commands, Promises, and Threats of a righteous and unchangeable GOD; delight in the Company of pious People, who will greatly further and comfort you in a holy Life; pray often, with Fervency of Spirit and Brokenness of Heart; look
unto

unto Jesus, your exalted Prophet, Priest, and King; live in Purity, Contentment, and Charity; abound in the Love of God; and ever think of this Life as a short Passage to an eternal Estate, and desire Heaven as your final Rest, thro' the Merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Sanctification of the Holy Ghost.

Our God is infinitely Gracious; He will accept the meanest Sincerity, and will cherish, not quench, the first Kindlings of Repentance, and the first Inclinations of Love towards Him; but He will reject and abhor all Hypocrisy, tho' never so splendid in outward Appearance.

Wherefore give God your Heart; be upright in all you do: Your Time of Labour cannot be long, but your Time of Rest and Reward will be everlasting.

That it may please God to direct you by his Grace; and thus to accept you thro' his Mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ; is the unfeigned Desire of my Soul, and the only Aim of this Letter, from

Your Affectionate Friend.

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